Hyperotomachia

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/45611980.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Alana Bloom, Jack Crawford, Beverly Katz, Jimmy Price, Brian Zeller
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Hannibal Lecter is a Cannibal, Hannibal Lecter is the Chesapeake Ripper, Hannibal Lecter Loves Will Graham, Possessive Hannibal Lecter, Protective Hannibal Lecter, Caring Hannibal Lecter, Manipulative Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham Being Will Graham, Profiling, Psychoanalysis, Hurt/Comfort, POV Jack Crawford, Jealous Alana Bloom, blink and you miss it - Freeform, Manipulative Relationship, Twisted and Fluffy Feelings, Fluff and Angst
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Aeipathy
Stats:	Published: 2023-03-09 Words: 4,220 Chapters: 1/1

Hyperotomachia

by TheProfoundSilence

Summary

There is adoration there when Hannibal looks at Will, and obsession when the Ripper glances through his eyes. He refuses to make an enemy out of Will. He refuses to let Will go.

Notes

Hyperotomachia: the struggle for love in a dream

I've gotten obsessed with Hannibal, and I fear it may be too late for me. I have written tens of stories for other fandoms and it seemed a shame that I don't have a Hannibal collection. So here I am, on my second fic in as many weeks. I have so many ideas and so many fics plotted out. Can't wait to share it all with you guys!

See the end of the work for more notes

The first Ripper kill was off by months. Where the Ripper killed in sounders of three after years of inactivity, he seemed to have come back after mere *weeks* of his last sounder.

A lady stood standing, her body fixed with subtle implements to give the illusion of posing, hair braided with flowers, a white taxidermized weird-looking animal cradled gently in her hands. Beverly had been informed it was an ermine with a scandalized look from Price as if he couldn't believe she didn't know that.

"I don't think it's the Ripper," Zeller added his two cents from his side of the room. Will looked wryly at him. At times he looked so much like the disapproving professor, Beverly felt embarrassed for whoever was on the receiving end of that glare.

"It's the Ripper," Will said simply, snapping off his gloves. His eyes were unfocused. "The message though… it's muddled. Contrary. There is something I am missing here."

"Yeah, like the fact that it's not the Ripper," Zeller insinuated slowly as if Will were a small child that did not understand anything. Will seemed unfazed by the insult. Usually, Beverly had noticed, Will was blunt and caustic but he only got truly agitated when someone else was agitated with him. It was usually Jack.

"Call me when you get another body," Will said flippantly, as he walked past Jack.

"Now hang on," Jack protested. "You haven't given us anything yet."

"You have my profile on the Ripper already. I'll add to that, but honestly," he turned back to look critically at the scene. "If I am right, he is going to escalate soon and fast. Not *exactly* the Ripper's MO"

"Yeah, because it isn't the Ripper," Zeller mocked.

"And you're sure he is the Ripper?" Jack sighed, as close to doubtful as he ever got around Will.

Will looked back, unfazed by his colleagues' doubts when others would have been rabid with anger. He is too good to doubt himself too much. "Call me when the next body drops," is all he says. And then walks away.

"Frigging asshole," Zeller muttered under his breath. "Thinks he is too good for the rest of us."

Of course, Zeller had to eat his own words when the next body dropped days later.

Most other serial killers killed along the same patterns. It was easy to see the Ripper when he was in the middle of the Sounder for this exact reason. He posed his victims to suit his fancy,

not as a compulsion. Even a non-profiler like Beverly could tell when he was in the middle of the sounder for that reason.

Will was brilliant, not least because he could tell when the sounder started and how it reflected on the Ripper's state of mind.

But this? This was undeniably the Ripper.

A woman stood on white snow, her leg raised as if to step out of the frame, entirely naked save for her fake hair draped over her body, fog creating a dramatic effect on the entire visage. The tech people were trying to shut off the fake fog machine generator.

Zeller refused to meet Will's eyes and Jack looked a little flush with embarrassment at his previous folly. To their side, Dr. Lecter walked to Will's left, quietly brushing against his shoulder.

Will didn't even seem to notice, frowning at the scene. "That's weird," he muttered.

"Is this a Ripper scene? It's my first yet," Hannibal confessed when Will turned to look at him. Will smiled a little, but was still clearly distracted. "What do you think of the flowers, doctor?"

Dr. Lecter blinked, as if in surprise and turned to look, with the rest of them at the scene. Surrounded by the shell were flowers blooming, almost artificially healthy and bright, as the woman seemed to step out. "I am afraid I am not familiar with them," the doctor confessed.

Will hummed.

"Are they important?" Beverly asked hesitantly. Out of the whole macabre scene, they were the only things relatively *normal* . She hadn't even noticed them.

"Presumably so. The Ripper hates to repeat himself and yet he used them for two consecutive crime scenes. And he added their own twist to them. They don't belong here."

Lecter hummed in recognition. "The Birth of Venus. The goddess of beauty and love walks the Earth to sow the chaos that comes with loving someone."

"Yes, and the last one was Lady with an Ermine. If I am not mistaken, the ermine in her hands was supposed to denote the purity of the woman, and the painting had some romantic overtures in its tones."

"So what?" Jack blinked, flabbergasted. "The theme of his sounder is romantic paintings."

Will shot him a dirty look. "The Ripper is a classic narcissist." *You would know that if you had read my profile* , was implied but left unsaid. "As much as he adores imitating works of art, he only imitates those arts which inspire him. So far, he has made his own and he has replicated works of art, but they all showed a common theme. Dark humor and the proverbial finger to god. This isn't like that. It's softer, fonder, almost.

The Lady with an Ermine is about innocent admiration, about romantic gestures made immortal. The Birth of Venus is about lady love being birthed into Earth itself. And the flowers… Dianthus Barbatus. Bearded pink. They commonly represent gallantry, love, admiration, adoration. Not to mention, they are perennial. Almost as if the Ripper is saying, this love is eternal."

There was dead silence for a few minutes.

Jack's voice cracked as he spoke. "You're saying the Ripper is in love?"

"But isn't he a psychopath?" Beverly asked bluntly. "How can he love?"

Will sighed. "Terms like psychopath and sociopath have not been used in any respectable psychiatric practice for decades now. They are too broad to capture the nuances of human behavior and entirely inaccurate besides. What he is, how he feels, he feels something for his special someone. Something that inspired him to do this."

"Inspired him to kill," Jack said bluntly.

Will sighed. "It's hardly that person's fault he has done this. Besides, I get the feeling she is either entirely unaware of her paramour's attention or his career as a serial killer. The first kill… talked of innocence. Nobody is entirely innocent and I doubt the Ripper is content with someone incapable of standing strong against him. Likely, what he means is that she is innocent of these crimes. Ignorant of his world."

"She?" Dr. Lecter asked, with a raised brow.

Will shrugged. "Balance of probability."

The third kill dragged Will right out of his lecture hall, just as he was leaving. He looked longingly at the exit. *So close.*

"The third kill," Hannibal said, his suit prim and proper, where Will looked like he had just barely rolled out of bed with his hair lying flat on one side and his clothes wrinkled from the day's stress. He handed Will a thermos of his own special brew. Will smiled cheerfully at Hannibal for that. His coffee was worth the overtime.

Hannibal's eyes smiled back at him. "I hope you're well enough to go to the crime scene?"

Will almost rolled his eyes at Hannibal. The man worried too much. "Yes, I'm good. Honestly, I have been better rested than before. Jack told me he would spare me the other crime scenes if I promised to make myself for the Ripper until he completes the sounder." And Hannibal had taken the time to try to fatten him up, and worry over him like a mother hen over her chicks. It made him feel warm and safe inside.

No matter what went wrong, at least there was Hannibal around to coax him through it.

Hannibal smiled. “I’m glad. Either way, it’ll be over soon,” he said ominously.

“Even if the Ripper ends his sounder, the rest of the killers will keep on killing.”

Hannibal had nothing to say to that.

“The statue of David,” Hannibal recognizes immediately. They had to look up to see it. It was perched up high in the Cathedral.

Will wrinkles his nose. “That’s not where the original David is placed, is it?”

“They planned to place it up high, but soon found it too perfect to be placed so far away.”

Will wrinkled his nose. “So this piece isn’t perfect… Or perhaps, it's not perfect *enough* .”

Hannibal kept his face bland, eyes neutral, for all he wanted to shower Will in praise. What a brilliant young man. Perhaps the only equal Hannibal had ever sought. But, unluckily for Will, Hannibal had a lot more cards in his hand. The game was rigged against Will from the start.

“The object of the Ripper’s affection,” Will said. “They’re in danger. He has all but said his kill isn’t perfect enough. Incomparable to the object of their affections.”

Jack tensed. “More bodies?”

“Difficult to say,” Will admitted. “If the Ripper really feels swept away by emotions, he might find it tough to exert his self-control, or he might keep to that self-control just as strongly. He is too shadowed to tell properly yet. Regardless, the Ripper might try to move in on them.”

“So what, we should tell everyone to be on the lookout for a man who might or might not be obsessed with them?” Jack said, irritated.

That was quite rude. “Jack,” Hannibal chided. “As the head of the BAU, you of all people should understand exactly how profilers work. We are not psychics and I do not appreciate you belittling our efforts so far. You know it’s not an exact science.”

There. He may have taken some of the credit for the profile, but he had also taken offense at Jack’s admonishment that was meant for Will. Now, Jack couldn’t possibly claim he was talking to Will without offending Lecter, or discrediting his work. Will sent him a thankful smile behind Jack’s shoulder.

“Ah, of course,” Jack said, toning down his irritation with the ease of a politician. “You know how crime scenes can keep a man on the edge.” Hannibal noticed the man did not apologize and swore to get his dues later.

“I suppose we can tell that his object of affection is brilliant. Not just conventionally smart, but absolutely brilliant in his field. Physically slight though.”

When the two blinked at him, perplexed, he huffed. “I have read about David before. And if the Ripper thinks that even David pales to his someone, it's likely because there *is* something to compare there. Michelangelo’s David highlights the thinking man, the ideal of the Renaissance who overcomes a giant with his mental prowess rather than his physical one.”

“I don’t,” Jack said, a little lost. “I don’t think a killer would think this much before killing a man. Are you sure you’re not reading too much into it?”

No, Jack, Hannibal thought amused. He really isn’t.

Soon enough, they would see it too.

The call went to emergency services around 11 at night on a Sunday night. It hardly took a few minutes for the call to be forwarded to the FBI. It was, after all, from the number and address of one of their consultants.

Both Alana and Jack sped all the way to Wolf Trap.

Please, God, Jack thought, please don’t take him too. Will was innocent, despite everything. He couldn’t bear it if something happened to him.

He rushed out to see Alana in the driveaway, all dressed up, presumably having left a party, crying, mascara down her cheeks. She didn’t seem to care. She didn’t seem to care about anything.

Heart in throat, Jack ran to her. She sobbed and threw herself on him, sobbing on his t-shirt. He hadn’t changed after he rolled out of bed.

“Is he-?”

She shook her head, and his heart just about stopped beating before she said, “He is alive. They both are.” At his questioning look, she elaborated, “Hannibal and Will. But oh, if Hannibal hadn’t been there,” she sobbed harder.

Inside, the paramedics were trying to strap down a sobbing Will. Jack rushed over to get him to calm down and near about choked on his own vomit. His entire chest cavity seemed wide open, blood and gore rushing down his sides and dripping from the stretcher to the floor below. His pupils were blown wide (*drugged*...) and he was making helpless soft sounds of pain as he tried to move, to shift, to fight, to do anything to soften the sharp sting of pain.

Jack staggered back. It was one thing to see dead bodies. It was another to see a man alive, half-tortured and sobbing in pain. He almost stumbled upon Dr. Lecter, who was sitting on the floor, his chin on his knees, staring blankly ahead. Where Will was buzzing with

movement, Lecter seemed to have been robbed of life. His eyes were blank, cold, dead. His wrists were two perfect circles of blood and chaffed skin, presumably from being tied up too roughly.

Jack swallowed. Knelt down. “Dr. Lecter,” he said softly. They both flinched when Will howled in pain in the background, begging, *begging* them to stop it, please stop it. Lecter looked up. “I want Will,” he said, as his voice cracked. “I just want-” To both of their alarm, he burst into sobs. “I-”

“It’s okay,” Jack raised his hands to show he meant no harm. “We’ll get you riding in the same ambulance. I just need to know,” he faltered. He couldn’t push this man for details. Job or not, even Jack’s heart wasn’t made of stone. More than that, his heart wasn’t in it. “Are you two safe?”

Lecter looked down. “I fear,” he said gravely. “That we may never be safe again.”

Jack personally drove after the ambulance, considering Alana was in no shape to do so. There were guards stationed at the hospital, but Jack wanted to be there personally. Nothing would be touching his consultants on his watch again.

He wasn’t allowed to see either of them for hours. When he was allowed in, he found Will, statue still, his eyes open, still making those terrible moans of pain as if he couldn’t bear to be alive anymore. It hurt to listen to.

There was nobody but Lecter in the room.

Jack cursed. “Where are the god damned doctors in this place?”

Lecter sighed. His own wrists had been bandaged so far. “There is nothing anyone can do. He has been drugged with a paralytic. It is not the wisest course of action to pair a sedative with it, as we do not know what exactly he was dosed with. Unless shock becomes too big a possibility, it would be best to leave him to ride it out.”

Alana was horrified. “Half of his chest was hanging out.”

“Mostly superficial, it has been dealt with” Lecter assured. He seemed tired, exhausted even, but he seemed to have regained his composure. “He would have lived even without immediate medical intervention. The pain and the shock are the worst of it, I fear. And perhaps the mental and emotional implications of such an ordeal.”

Despite the horror of their talk, the three kept their voice low and calm. It seemed to soothe Will in any case, as his eyes fluttered shut. When Lecter took Will’s hand in his, he opened his eyes to peer at Hannibal then let them flutter shut again.

Jack kept his voice low as well. “What happened?”

Lecter blinked tiredly. “We found the Ripper’s object of affection. It turns out that those flowers we found at the crime scene? They’re also called Sweet Williams.”

Alana’s eyes widened. “A little too in-your-face for the Ripper, isn’t it?”

Lecter shrugged. “None of us made the connection. I am sure he must be laughing at us for it anyway. That does sound like him to me.”

Jack leaned forward. “You saw the Ripper?” Desperation practically dripped down his tongue, and the monster in Hannibal savored it well.

“I am afraid not. I went to Will for dinner on Saturday. We went outside to let the dogs out. He wanted to show me something in the woods. Then, I must have been hit or drugged or something. But the next thing I remember is that I was locked in a closet, hands tied, and Will was screaming from across the room,” Hannibal’s voice wavered here.

“Will had thrown his jacket in the closet with his phone accidentally before. I didn’t realize it before. It took me the better part of the day to cut myself free and find the phone and dial for help.”

“Do you regularly have dinner with Will, Hannibal?” Alana asked. Jack looked at her incredulously. That was hardly the most important takeaway here.

“Whenever feasible,” Hannibal admitted. “He is my friend and he told me that he refused to eat my quote-unquote pretentious meals every day.”

Alana smiled sadly. “Sounds like him. Does he eat fish every day?”

Hannibal almost smiled. “He likes to fish more than he likes to eat it. So he always keeps a full freezer and complains about it every time he opens it.” He glanced down at the hand in his own, and impulsively leaned down to kiss it. His eyes, unseen by Alana and Jack, were sharp though. Jack would have been disappointed to realize that the Ripper hadn’t lost control. Will wouldn’t have been surprised though. “I am not sure he will forgive me for being so slow and weak in protecting him when he needed it the most.”

Alana hugged him from the side, letting her hand curl around the two of theirs entwined together. Will looked fast asleep. And Jack felt like he did not belong in this circle of comfort and protection. “He will forgive you,” she promised. “Because there is nothing to forgive.”

Hannibal bowed his head, his hair messily falling on his forehead. He had never looked more human before.

The paralytics wore off in due time.

They were designed to hurt and not numb the pain, to keep Will awake and aware and tortured for his session with the Ripper. Jack had, in the privacy of his home, wept bitter tears

when he saw the reports. It was after such a long time that Bella found a reason to hold him, to comfort him, instead of the other way ‘round. He had kissed her hand like Hannibal had kissed Will’s.

Still, Hannibal insisted on an extended hospital stay for Will, just to make sure, and Will was too exhausted to protest, and everyone else too guilty. It was, anyway, a blessing in disguise when the news outlets got their hand on it and surrounded the place. Will would have been mobbed if he had been at home. At least they were quiet here, owing to the fact that it was a hospital.

Alana wanted nothing more than to stay, to hold Will’s hand, to coddle Hannibal rotten, but there seemed to be no space for her. Hannibal insisted on bracing Will when he walked, insisted on feeding Will, brushing his hair from his head, on holding his hand through his night terrors.

For all Will appreciated the help, it wasn’t hard to tell he was uncomfortable with it too. He let it happen for the same reason that Alana did. Hannibal needed to be the protector now when he hadn’t been able to play the part before.

When Will was gone for tests or was sleeping, Hannibal stared out the window, lost without a ship to guide him home.

“It’s not healthy, you know,” Alana had to tell him one day. “This codependency with Will. It's not fair to him or to you to carry this guilt around with you. It's only the Ripper’s fault and nobody else’s.”

Hannibal barely blinked. “It is normal to have an abnormal response to an abnormal situation. Besides, trauma takes time to heal. I am a psychiatrist too, Alana.”

She didn’t relent that easily. “Do you think it is fair to Will to have to deal with your emotions on top of his?”

Hannibal turned to her, eyes focused. “Do you think it is fair to me to deal with *your* idea of what healthy trauma should look like? There is no such thing as a normal response to such situations, Alana. Would you rather I shove my feelings in a box to help you feel better about it?”

Alana bit her lip. “Of course not, Hannibal but I-”

Hannibal spoke over her, a rude thing to do and undoubtedly a sign of his waning patience with her. “Now that we agree that I cannot help the emotions I feel and that I should not repress them, I really must ask where and how you come into this equation considering you are not my psychiatrist. Will and I have talked this through, I have talked to my psychiatrist about it, we are both working through our emotions and yet you must insist on showing your disapproval where we need a friend more than anything else!”

When Hannibal looked up, he was pleased to see Alana’s head bowed, shame wracking her body. He let a moment of triumph pass his eyes before he schooled his features again.

“I didn’t mean it like that,” Alana said, sorrowful. “I am sorry Hannibal, I suppose I let my professional instincts get in the way of my friendship.”

He nodded stiffly. “I would rather you not upset Will in such a way. He has had a very hard time lately even without the weight of other people’s expectations on his shoulders.”

She nodded meekly but stepped outside the first chance she got. Hannibal was satisfied. She wouldn’t disturb Hannibal’s plans anymore.

On the day of Will’s release from the hospital, someone left Sweet Williams in Will’s hospital room while he was sleeping. They were soaked in blood instead of water, the vase carved of human bones, in the shape of a hand holding a bouquet.

They didn’t need Will Graham to tell them where the flowers came from.

The US Marshals were a force to be reckoned with, and while they had no direct obligation to the FBI, they worked well together. Technically, Will wasn’t a witness yet. Technically, protective custody should have been enough.

But this was the Ripper. And Jack refused to take any chances.

“A final dinner, Doctor?” Jack smiled slyly. “That sounds so much like an ending.”

“Not an ending,” Dr. Lecter smiled indulgently. “A new beginning perhaps.”

Alana seemed a little tense in her seat, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear delicately. “I wish Will could have joined us as well.”

Hannibal sighed. “He is resting upstairs. You can meet him later tonight. He wasn’t much in the mood to celebrate tonight.”

“Not much to celebrate,” Alana agreed morosely. Jack faltered a little. While he may be losing his two good profilers, Alana was losing two of her very good friends. She turned to Hannibal. “Are you sure you must leave as well?”

Alana wanted to argue more, Hannibal knew. Wanted to tell them that perhaps it wasn’t exactly professional to get so close to a patient, that Will was vulnerable, that he needed

things Hannibal couldn't give him. Hannibal disagreed. He could give Will everything in this whole wide world and then some more.

Besides, there was only so much she could argue against. Their lives were on the line and that was more important than any sense of proprietary she may come up with. And she was still chastised from Hannibal's bristling disapproval back in the hospital. She would bite her tongue for now. And it wouldn't matter soon enough anyway.

Hannibal sighed and set down his glass.

It hadn't been Jack's idea to let Hannibal go. There had been no threats, nothing to acknowledge the Ripper's interest in Hannibal. But when the Marshals had come to talk with Will, Hannibal had stayed to talk to them. It had been an entirely unanimous decision that Hannibal's presence had ruined the Ripper's design, had detracted him from his object of affection. He was in trouble too.

Besides, Jack thought, it was better for Hannibal to keep an eye on him than to let Will walk it alone. He would get emotional support. And Hannibal was a vicious fighter, good at self defense. He would protect Will.

Considering the dogs couldn't go, it was the least he could go.

That was the first time Jack had seen Will weep out of pure misery and sorrow, when he had been told he would have to give up his dogs, that they were too distinctive. Hannibal had pulled Will to his chest, let him cry it out, and comforted him where Will didn't even let Jack close.

It had further cemented Jack's decision.

"Take care of Will for me," Jack couldn't help but plead, softer than he had intended.

Hannibal smiled. His eyes twinkled with the weight of a thousand different secrets. "I promise Jack. I will never let him go." He reached down and held up his glass of wine up in a toast. "To new beginnings."

They toasted to it.

End Notes

Just Hannibal being Hannibal :)
But I figured that if he realized and accepted that he needed Will with him earlier in a very different way, then things could have been very different. Why make an enemy out of Will when he could fostered co-dependency forever until the point where Will didn't even know how to live without Hannibal, much less think of getting out. As always, Jack helped. Though I am sure, he would be horrified to discover Hannibal's basement months down the line, which would be much too late to do anything at all. They could be anywhere by then. Again, that's practically canon.

Hope you guys liked it! Kudos and comments make me want to write more!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!